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## Asa Gray.

Three months ago the sad news that Professor Gray was stricken with paralysis and that there was slight hope of his recovery brought deep sorrow to all the friends of botany in this country. All hoped and prayed for the best, but his time had come, and we have all lost a revered teacher and a true friend. This is no time for a cold review of his scientific work nor need we record the incidents of his life, but, while our recent bereavement rests heavily upon us, we may well recall those personal traits which endeared him to us all. In recounting his own personal experience the writer feels assured that, in all that concerns those qualities which made a deep impression at the time and still linger as a precious memory, his experience was the experience of all who knew Prof. Gray, and he trusts that the tribute which he can but imperfectly express will find a response in the hearts of all American botanists.

Although nearly twenty-five years have passed, it seems but a short time since the writer first met Prof. Gray in the class-room. Having previously studied the Structural Botany, and being familiar to some extent with the Manual, he was curious to see their author, and pictured to himself an elderly man, learned, of course, but probably unapproachable. How different the reality! He saw a young-looking man, with strikingly bright and expressive eyes, quick in all his motions, and so thoroughly in earnest and absorbed in his subject that he assumed that all his hearers must be equally interested. There was an air of simplicity and straightforwardness without a trace of the conscious superiority or the pedantic manner which so often accompanies learning, so that he seemed to be one of us, a student among students. In those days all students were required to study botany for one term, and, although there were, of course, some to whom the subject itself was distasteful, the instructor was beloved by all. The lectures were then given in an old room in Harvard Hall, which had once served as the college library and afterward as a sort of museum. All the material for the botanical lectures had to be brought from the garden, and twice a week, as the spring advanced, we used to see him

hurrying down Garden street, a most picturesque object, so covered by the mass of branches and flowers which were to illustrate the lecture that his head and body were hardly visible. No provision was then made for those who wished to continue the study of botany beyond one term, but, although it must have been a serious drain on the time intended for his own scientific work, no student who expressed a desire to learn more than the college authorities required failed to receive from him all the special instruction he needed. The few who gathered round the little table in Harvard Hall in pursuit of knowledge which did not count in the college reckoning will never forget the untiring patience with which he explained what then seemed difficult, the contagious enthusiasm with which he led them on from simple facts toward the higher fields of science, or the tender personal interest which he showed in their hopes and half formed plans for the future—an interest which, on his part, only strengthened as years passed on, and makes them now mourn, not so much the death of a great botanist, as the loss of a sympathizing friend.

The same simplicity and sincerity, the same enthusiasm and sympathy with the work of others, characterized him to the end. Only the day before he was prostrated with paralysis he conversed with the same clearness and vivacity, and exhibited the same lively interest in what was being done by botanists at home and abroad, as in his younger days. Although far along in years, he always remained young in spirit. Time may have bent his form a little, but it could not cloud the cheerful, happy heart nor dim the alert mind which made his presence a joy in any company, grave or gay, old or young. This cheerfulness was not that which arises from mere animal spirits. It came from a deep conviction that everything, whatever it may seem to be, is really good. This faith and abiding hope which sprang from within made itself constantly felt in his intercourse with others, and inspired them, for, while those around him were despondent, he always felt that in the end everything would turn out well. Even the death of the scientific friends with whom he had been associated for many years did not depress him as it did others. He treasured their memories without repining, and no one could so well as he rehearse the story of their lives and work, or express the words of deep sympathy which many felt but could not utter.

In nothing was his kindly disposition better seen than in his criticism of the work of other botanists. His own standard

of work was so high that he might well have been pardoned had he shown little tolerance of the cruder work of others. But his criticisms, always discriminating, although they were at times severe, were never ill-natured nor personal, and among the countless reviews which he wrote there is scarcely one in which there is not something of commendation and encouragement to the author. His view of botany was broad, and he had no patience with those who sneer at work which is not done in their own fashion, or in a direction which accords with their own tastes. From the nature of his training, and the condition of his surroundings, his own work was confined principally to descriptive phænogamic botany, but he always appreciated and encouraged workers in other fields, and was especially eager to hear the results obtained and the methods pursued in what may be called the younger departments of the science. Being himself liberal in his conception of botanical work, he claimed that others should be equally liberal, and he protested against the narrowness which has of late appeared in some quarters and claims that there is nothing worth studying except histology and life histories.

The mental activity of Prof. Gray was certainly extraordinary. He had no idle moments. To him leisure did not mean a respite from work, but rather an opportunity for doing something more. After a hard day's work on the Flora he would sit down in the evening as fresh as ever, and dash off reviews and notices with an ease and skill really marvelous. He wrote as easily as he talked, and all his writings, even the most unpretentious, were in the same graceful, flowing style, rippling with a delicate humor and sparkling with imagination. The social and scientific meetings, which he enjoyed so much, also demanded from him considerable labor, for, as he was generally expected to speak, and was not contented with the formal phrases and rambling remarks of extemporaneous speakers, he usually, on such occasions, presented carefully written papers. In his later years his friends urged him to take more rest, but it was of no use; unless he was at work he was not happy. One might have supposed that, if ever, he would have felt that he could afford to rest on his seventy-fifth birthday, when the memorial vase was presented and letters of congratulation poured in from all parts of the land. But no; affected as he was by the unexpected testimonial of respect and friendship, he still kept at work, and when a friend, late in the

afternoon, remarked that it must have been a great pleasure to him to read the friendly greetings, he replied: "I have not read them yet. I must work now. This evening I shall have time to read them."

To speak of his hospitality might, in some connections, appear ungracious. But here, as botanists, we may touch upon a subject associated by us, especially, with so many tender recollections. When we heard that Prof. Gray was dead we recognized the irreparable loss to American botany in the death of its leader, but our first thoughts turned to the happy home now so deeply afflicted, and we recalled the bright days when all were welcomed with a sincere and hearty greeting. No matter whether a titled foreigner, or a poor, and perhaps friendless, student from our own land, all botanists were welcomed with the same unostentatious hospitality, guided by that intuitive delicacy which anticipates the wishes of others, and draws timidity from its reserve. Many, many botanists now count among their happiest hours those spent at the old house in Cambridge, and, with sorrow mingled with gratitude, sincerely hope that their sympathy may prove, in some measure, a consolation to his bereaved wife, his companion for many years, his counterpart in all that is gentle, true and noble. For a while we may think only of what we have lost, but when time shall have blunted the edge of our sorrow we shall recognize that the best part of a well-spent life is the fragrant memory which it leaves behind.

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## Iowa Peronosporeæ and a dry season.

BYRON D. HALSTED.

The readers of the BOTANICAL GAZETTE who are interested in the downy mildews and their allies may desire to learn of some observations made upon this group of destructive parasites in connection with a season of excessive dryness. For the last two years central Iowa has been visited by a drought unequaled in the history of the state, a drought which not only rendered the meadows and pastures brown and lifeless in midsummer, but was so prolonged as to empty the "never-failing" wells and dry up streams of considerable size.